



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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1/3 BILLION OF TAXPAYERS DOLLARS RETURNED TO RURAL MISSOURI THROUGH USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In a ceremony, USDA Rural Development presented a \$340,000,000 check representing financial assistance to rural Missourians during Fiscal Year 2003. The assistance was through a variety of loan and grant programs to thousands of individuals, families, businesses and communities in Missouri.

Greg Branum, State Director for USDA Rural Development in Missouri, said "Rural Development is proud to implement President Bush's initiatives while helping rural Missouri with the \$340 million in financial assistance. The funds were used to provide quality housing, good jobs, clean drinking water and waste disposal systems plus reliable modern essential community facilities and services. The accomplishments were in support of the agency's overall mission of **"increasing economic opportunity in Rural America, improving the quality of life in Rural America, and being responsive to customer needs."**

United States Senators Christopher "Kit" Bond and Jim Talent, along with United States Representatives Jo Ann Emerson and Kenny Hulshof participated in the ceremony recognizing the Agency's accomplishments in the return of tax dollars to rural Missouri.

Senator Bond said, "As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, it is very heart warming to see tax dollars returned to Missouri and put to use in worthwhile projects to help so many people. I am very pleased my investment of time and energy to appropriate funds to USDA Rural Development is a good investment for Missouri."

"Rural Development's investment in Missouri has assisted in improving the quality of life and increasing economic opportunity for many individuals and communities across Missouri," said U.S. Senator Jim Talent, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "I applaud these accomplishments and encourage others to seek out this kind of assistance as we work to create jobs and stimulate the economy in rural Missouri."

U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson, said, "The funds made available through these USDA Rural Development programs are truly an investment in the future of rural America --- its infrastructure, its economic development, its job creation opportunities for the future, and its people. In return for that investment we will have a more prosperous Missouri. I am pleased that by working with others in Congress and with our local stakeholders, we have been able to return these tax dollars to our communities and make these projects a reality."

U.S. Representative Hulshof, said, "I'd like to congratulate and thank Missouri's USDA Rural Development staff for another outstanding year. Through their hard work and dedication, USDA Rural Development has played a vital role in helping address the needs of our rural communities."

U. S. Representative Todd Akin said, "These USDA programs represent hope for much of rural America. The grants and loans that are available only through Rural Development make economic development projects, public facilities, clean water and livable dwellings a reality for many communities and the people they serve."

U.S. Representative Roy Blunt said, "The USDA funds for rural development are an investment in rural Missouri and its people. New septic and water systems--keys to economic growth--would be impossible to fund for many rural communities without the resources of Rural Development. Many communities have benefited from these resources. The partnerships established between USDA and local communities improve basic services, create new job opportunities, and open the door of economic opportunity. Returning tax dollars to neighborhoods and communities to fund solutions for local problems is an appropriate way to help our towns and cities improve the quality of life for their residents."

In the **Rural Housing Service** (RHS) program a grand total of \$150 million of financial service was provided in Missouri. Of this amount, \$96.1 million of loan guarantees for home loans was provided through partnerships with private sector lenders assisting 1,287 individuals or families. Another \$27.7 million was provided to 937 deserving individuals or families through the 502 and 504 direct housing program. Affordable rental units benefited rural residents in 7 communities where \$1.56 million was loaned for apartment complexes. It is estimated that over 4,500 jobs were saved or created to provide housing in rural Missouri. Another \$14.2 million of rental assistance was provided to 8,900 very low income families living in federally financed rental projects. Fifty-five families benefited with \$230,000 of repairs through a Housing Preservation Grant.

One Self-Help Technical Assistance grant was issued for \$10,000 to assist with predevelopment costs to help twelve families with housing assistance. Through countless hours of hard work, they combined a Rural Development housing loan with their own "sweat equity" to build a home and realize the American Dream of homeownership.

Through the Community Facilities program, \$10.1 million was provided to 60 communities for projects including 24 fire and rescue departments (building and equipment), 21 weather warning systems, 11 senior centers, 2 health care facilities, an ambulance building, a daycare, a thrift store, a community center, a school district and a library.

A Rural Community Development Initiative Grant for \$102,014 was awarded to assist an area of the state with economic development initiatives.

In the **Rural Business-Cooperative Service** (RBS) program a grand total of \$24.9 Million was delivered to rural Missouri. Of this amount, over \$19.1 million were loaned or guaranteed with our commercial lender partners to assist 11 businesses across the state. Funds were used to finance retail businesses (miscellaneous sales and service businesses, convenience store); service businesses (warehouse/storage, restaurant, motel); and manufacturing businesses (plastic food containers, lumber products). As a result of these loans, 446 jobs were created or saved in Missouri rural areas.

Several cities, communities, counties and organizations were recipients of almost \$5.8 Million through other Rural Development loan and grant programs. This included 23 Rural Business Enterprise Grants totaling \$1,333,253, 1 Rural Business Opportunity Grants totaling \$50,000, 1 Intermediary Re-lending program loan totaling \$500,000, 1 Ag Innovation Center grant for \$300,000, 2 Renewable Energy Grant for \$124,449, and 2 Rural Cooperative Development Grant in the amount of \$624,000. Missouri was also very fortunate to receive 13 Value Added grants totaling \$2,817,804 to fund a variety of projects across the state. All of these programs allowed rural Missourians to benefit with assistance in planning, feasibility studies, training, conducting surveys, and essential infrastructure in support of economic and community development activities in rural areas.

In the **Rural Utilities Services** (RUS) program, a grand total of \$165.8 million of assistance was provided to communities, including water and wastewater facilities, electrical and telephone distribution

systems. In the water and wastewater area, \$30.5 million was made available through 40 loans and 39 grants which assisted over 10,600 families with adequate drinking water and new or improved wastewater disposal systems in 46 communities. These USDA funds were leveraged with \$17.7 of other federal, state, and local funds.

In addition, Missouri received two Solid Waste Management Grants for \$131,000 to provide technical assistance to communities to evaluate landfill conditions and to determine threats to water resources.

There were 11 projects benefiting communities through Emergency Community Water Assistance (ECWAG) grants totaling \$3,363,810 for drought related projects.

Another 18 cities or communities benefited from \$184,525 in Predevelopment Planning Grants (PPG). Most of this money will be used for preliminary Engineering and Environmental reports for water and wastewater systems.

In the Telephone program area, a Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant in the amount of \$89,928 was made to a rural telephone cooperative to provide improved communication, education opportunities, and access to health services. Loans are available through the telephone program to connect subscribers, provide improvements in the transmission and switching facilities, provide fiber optic cables, and expand telecommunication systems to, and provide better service to, rural Missouri residents.

In the Electrical program, 9 direct and guaranteed loans for \$134.9 million assisted several communities and rural residents. The funds were utilized to assist one borrower with generation and transmission of electricity and 7 borrowers to distribute electricity to end users/customers. It is estimated 22,574 new rural residential consumers benefited from the electrical program.

Branum extended special thanks to Missouri's federal elected officials including U.S. Senators "Kit" Bond and Jim Talent plus U.S. Representatives Kenny Holshof and Jo Ann Emerson, for making these federal monies available to rural Missourians.

Branum added, "I want to offer my sincere appreciation to the many partners that assisted Missouri USDA Rural Development staff with these accomplishments. With continued cooperation, we look forward to helping more individuals, families, businesses and communities with their needs in 2004."

Anyone seeking more information about USDA Rural Development or any of the programs, may visit the Missouri USDA Rural Development Web Site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo/> or by contacting any of the Missouri USDA Rural Development offices.